

Visitor Use

VISITOR USE OF THE PARK

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park was recently established and does not yet encompass any land, buildings, or facilities. Since the park's creation, a superintendent has been hired and staff positions are beginning to be identified and staffed as funding becomes available. As with any newly created but undeveloped unit of the national park system, there is not yet a history of visitor use.

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park is a nontraditional park in that its legislated mission extends beyond any physical boundaries. The official boundaries of this cultural park have not yet been determined. This planning effort will help establish the location of park facilities and boundaries. Congress has authorized the National Park Service to acquire and develop an interpretive visitor center complex as part of the park. Such a center would serve as the primary locus from which park programs would emanate. Other sites could be designated as part of the park if they are found to be suitable and feasible for acquisition, and they further the purposes of the park. Still other sites could become associated with the park by virtue of cooperative agreements. However, a large part of the park's mission will involve technical assistance and jazz educational programs that will occur outside the park's officially designated boundaries.

Since facilities and programs have not yet been developed, visitor use of the park has yet to be tabulated. Once the park is ready to receive visitors, official recording procedures will be established and the park will begin to record visitor use.

Overnight use will not be counted or reported for this park. Providing for overnight accommodations is neither within the scope of the park nor necessary given the extensive

lodging services available from the private sector in the New Orleans region.

PARK VISITOR FACILITIES

Possible locations for visitor centers include Louis Armstrong Park and the Old U.S. Mint.

Louis Armstrong Park

This park officially opened in 1980, though work on it began in the 1960s. The park encompasses the Municipal Auditorium, Congo Square, and structures from the Treme Community. Congo Square has served as a gathering place for the New Orleans African-American community for more than 200 years. To create the park and setting for a theater of the performing arts, Treme residences and businesses, including early jazz halls, were demolished. The original plan was to keep Perseverance Hall No. 4, the pumping station, and the fire house (constructed in the 1940s) while most of the other structures in the nearly 32 acres area would be removed. As time passed the city decided to preserve the Caretaker's House (built in 1830 for Perseverance Hall No. 4), Rabassa House (moved from its original location at 1125 St. Ann Street), and the Reimann House (moved from its original location at 618 S. Gayoso). These buildings were grouped together to define a courtyard linked by a two-story arcade and elevator tower.

Two of these structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are Perseverance Hall No. 4 and the Jean Louis Rabassa House. Both are listed as being locally significant for architecture. The Rabassa House was constructed between 1825 to 1833 and is locally significant as a raised cottage structure. It is one of the few surviving structures of this type in New Orleans. The Rabassa House was relocated to Louis Armstrong Park from Treme.

Perseverance Hall No. 4 was a white-built and managed Masonic lodge erected between 1819 and 1820. It is the oldest Masonic temple in Louisiana and is significant in the areas of religion, philosophy, and Masonic historic places. Its associative significance to the evolution of New Orleans jazz appears to be marginal and is based on its use for dances, where black jazz performers and bands reportedly played for black or white audiences. Although the building was used for social functions such as weddings and balls where jazz musicians performed, these uses have only been occasionally documented, perhaps because many pertinent Masonic records have been destroyed. Furthermore, confusion often exists over whether historical references pertain to this building or to Perseverance Hall on Villere Street. During the early 1900s some bands, such as the Golden Rule Band, were barred from appearing at Perseverance Hall No. 4, apparently because management considered them too undignified for the place. Various organizations, both black and white, rented Perseverance Hall No. 4 for dances, concerts, Monday night banquets, and recitals. The building also served as a terminal point for Labor Day parades involving white and black bands. During the 1920s and 1930s, well past the formative years of jazz, various jazz bands played there.

Old U.S. Mint New Orleans Branch

This structure is a national historic landmark and is significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, military, and urban planning, according to the National Register of Historic Places. It is located at 420 Esplanade Avenue and presently contains part of the Louisiana State Museum. It houses the New Orleans Jazz Club Collection and has a wing of exhibits dedicated to the jazz story. The Min is a large three-story building constructed in 1835. During the Civil War, it was taken over and briefly used by Confederate forces to mint coins. It served as a mint until 1909, when it was converted into a federal prison. Later it served as a Coast Guard receiving station during World War II. In 1966 the building was transferred by the federal

government to the state of Louisiana for preservation as a historic landmark. The Louisiana State Museum was designated as the state agency responsible for the building's administration, maintenance, preservation, and restoration. The state of Louisiana has renovated the building to serve museum purposes.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

Principal activities offered by the park consist of orientation to the park at the visitor center, viewing interpretive displays, exhibits, and historical artifacts, and experiencing recorded and live jazz performances and demonstrations. The public occasionally has opportunities to talk to and interact with performing artists and musicians. A broad range of jazz-related educational activities and interpretive outreach programs are provided in the environs of New Orleans. As funding permits, the National Park Service endeavors to provide complementary activities, experiences, programs, services, and technical assistance to the already ongoing jazz-oriented educational and preservation efforts of numerous individuals, institutions, and entities already working to preserve and promote jazz music as an important and unique part of American culture.

VISITATION

New Orleans is an important destination city for many visitors. Mardi Gras, the Vieux Carré, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, other special events, sporting events, concerts, and food all attract visitors to the city.

The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation participated in the 1990 Travel USA Benchmark survey. This was the largest and most comprehensive study of the American leisure traveler ever completed. The study was updated for New Orleans in 1992, resulting in the following information regarding the city's tourism:

- New Orleans was found to have a superb image that attracts upscale consumers from across the nation.
- New Orleans is considered the most unique and exciting city in North America in the mind of the traveling public.
- In 1992 an estimated 6.5 million overnight visitors 18+ years of age came to New Orleans.
- An additional 1.1 million visitors spent time in New Orleans but did not stay overnight, while 400,000 overnight visitors to Louisiana passed through the city.
- Direct tourism expenditures in New Orleans amounted to \$1.8 billion in 1992.
- New Orleans expenditures are broken out as follows

Local transportation	\$203 million
Accommodations	\$493 million
Food	\$504 million
Retail	\$479 million
Recreation/Sightseeing/ Entertainment	\$148 million

These facts indicate that the city has an excellent image as a visitor attraction, over 7.5 million individuals visited the city in 1992, and over \$1.8 billion was spent in New Orleans by tourists in 1992.

The implications for the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park are that tourism, already an important and thriving sector of the local economy, continues to rise, and thus, there is a large and ever-increasing pool of visitors to the city that potentially could visit the park.

Once the park is ready to receive visitors at its visitor center and other sites, and once outreach and jazz educational and interpretive programs are implemented, procedures would be established that would allow the park staff to record and report public use. Until then

there would not be any comprehensive visitor use data available for the park. However, based on the above data, it can be reasonably assumed that the park will receive substantial numbers of visitors. This assumption is realistic because New Orleans is internationally known for its jazz music, jazz performers, and jazz heritage and is a major tourist and convention destination. Moreover the area is the primary tourist destination in Louisiana and receives millions of visitors each year.

It is impossible at this time to accurately predict how many persons may visit the park or may experience park programs annually. Yet, an examination of visitor use at a number of attractions in the New Orleans area provides some insight into the volume of public use that the park may receive. The Vieux Carré is one of the oldest and most popular sections of New Orleans and a major tourist attraction. It retains a rich heritage of jazz music as well as an active connection with jazz. Besides the music being played in commercial jazz nightclubs, at Preservation Jazz Hall, and on the streets themselves, the Louisiana State Museum maintains exhibits telling the story of jazz at its Old U.S. Mint facility located at the end of the French Market. A small fee is charged for entrance to this museum and accurate visitor use figures are maintained (see table 8).

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve's Vieux Carré Visitor Center introduces the public to the Vieux Carré and to the other units of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (table 10). Even though this contact point does not have a high profile, significant numbers of visitors are served from the facility. These attractions hint of the potential appeal that a visitor center for New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park might have if located within or near the Vieux Carré. Expected visitor use of New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park could range from 45,000 to 60,000 or more persons annually during its first years of operation.

TABLE 9: ANNUAL VISITATION, LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM, OLD U.S. MINT UNIT

Year	Visitation
1997	50,301
1996	49,621
1995	46,840
1994	49,442
1993	54,353
1992	44,853
1991	36,543
1990	39,567
1989	39,098
1988	29,494
1987	20,290
1986	26,570

Source: Louisiana State Museum

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park would not count or report overnight stays because the park does not provide overnight accommodations. In a large city such as New Orleans there is no need for the National Park Service to provide lodging services. The private sector provides these, and there are currently more than 20,000 rooms in Orleans

TABLE 10: JEAN LAFITTE HISTORICAL PARK AND PRESERVE, VIEUX CARRÉ VISITOR CENTER

Year	Recreation Visits
1997	57,771
1996	62,950
1995	58,737
1994	63,020
1993	87,147

Source: National Park Service, Public Use Statistics Program Center (PSPC).

Recreation visits are the entries of persons, for any part of a day, onto lands or waters administered by the NPS for recreation purposes.

Parish available for the touring public. An additional 6,300 rooms are available in adjoining Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes. Except for events such as Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest, the area's hotels and motels have excess capacity; the average occupancy rates have been a little over 70% for the period 1991 to 1995.

Visitor Profile for New Orleans

Obviously, a visitor profile cannot be developed for visitors to a park that does not yet have a history of use. Yet, much is already known about visitors to the New Orleans area. In 1994 the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., initiated a visitor survey to collect information about New Orleans visitors. Data on age, occupation, education, and income obtained from the survey respondents are presented below (tables 11–13). While the visitor profile for typical New Orleans visitors may not be the same as that for the park, the visitors represented by this survey would reflect the population from which visitors to New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park would be drawn.

TABLE 11: DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Age Bracket	Percent of Total Respondents
21–30 years	21%
31–40 years	24%
41–50 years	25%
51–60 years	17%
61–70 years	10%
over 70 years	3%
Total	100%

Source: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., Visitor Profile Study, 1994.

Regarding the visitor profile for the New Orleans tourist, respondents indicated that 68% were married or living with a partner, 26% were single, and the remaining 6% were either divorced, widowed, or separated. Most respondents (63%) did not have children at home, while 37% lived in homes with children. However, only 16% of the groups surveyed were traveling with children. The average age of the respondents was early 40s, and the majority held positions in managerial or professional occupations. More than one-half were college graduates and their household income was estimated to be in the low \$60,000s. Ethnically/racially, the respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly Caucasian (88%), while people of African-American, Asian, and Hispanic descent made up 7%, 2%, and 1% of the total, respectively. Previous research had described visitors to New Orleans as upscale in terms of income, education, and occupation, and this study concluded the same.

**TABLE 12: DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY
RESPONDENTS BY OCCUPATION**

Occupation	Percent of Total Respondents
Professional/ Managerial	47%
Retired	12%
Technical/ Administrative	12%
Sales or Service	9%
Unclassified	8%
Students	7%
Homemakers	3%
Military	1%
Unemployed	1%
Total	100%

Source: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., Visitor Profile Study, 1994.

**TABLE 13: DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY
RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION**

Education	Percent of Total Respondents
Post-Graduate	28%
College Graduate	30%
Some College	26%
High School	14%
Some High School or less	2%
Total	100%

Source: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., Visitor Profile Study, 1994.

The survey reported that the average (mean) party size visiting New Orleans was composed of 3.6 people, although the most frequent (mode) group size was of two people. The median size was also of two people. The study noted that many respondents were traveling with large groups, and this probably led to the larger mean party size. The sample was about evenly split between first-time visitors and repeat visitors. Vacations and conventions were the two most frequently given reasons for visitation (table 15). Most visitors were in town for more than one day (92%), the rest for just one day. For those in the sample that stayed overnight, the average length of stay was 4.4 nights (the mode was three nights and the median was four nights).

The Vieux Carré was very popular with visitors, with 87% of the survey respondents having visited this part of town. Respondents stated that they intended to visit the riverfront (90% of the sample), Jackson Square (90%), and the aquarium (37%) as part of their trip.

Almost all respondents were satisfied (83% of the sample) or somewhat satisfied (16%) with their New Orleans experience. Only 1% of the respondents were very dissatisfied with their visit. The major complaints noted in the study were (1) the city is dirty, (2) everything is so

expensive (e.g., restaurants, hotels, parking, attractions), (3) the street people make New Orleans unattractive (visitors additionally fear for their personal safety around these people, and the beggars are aggressive), and (4) safety concerns and crime were frequent issues.

Visitor origins were also identified in the survey. Respondents came from a variety of states and several foreign countries. Visitors with domestic origins came from Texas (11% of respondents), Florida (9%), California (7%), Louisiana (7%), and New York (5%). Fourteen other states were represented in the sample by between 2% and 14% of respondents. The foreign visitors came from the United Kingdom (16% of foreign visitors sampled), Germany (15%), Canada (13%), and Australia (10%). Eleven other countries were represented in the sample by between 2% and 5% percent of the foreign visitors sampled. These results suggest the city has a wide national and international appeal as a tourist destination.

The implications for management of New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park are that the typical tourist visiting New Orleans is also likely to be the typical visitor to the park. That is, out-of-town visitors to the park would tend to be upscale in terms of income, education, occupation, and would be traveling without children for the purpose of a vacation. This would be one segment of the park visitor population that would be atypical of the general visitor population to national parks (i.e., middle-class and working-class families traveling with children). Although the New Orleans tourist is also likely to be a New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park visitor, this is not the only segment of the visitor population that is important to the success of the park. The traditional and typical national park visitor, as well as the local population, including school groups, will also constitute important audiences for the park's programs and interpretive messages.

TABLE 14: DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INCOME

Income Range	Percent of Total Respondents
under \$25,000	12%
\$25,000 to \$39,000	15%
\$40,000 to \$54,000	20%
\$55,000 to \$74,000	21%
\$75,000 to \$149,000	18%
Over \$150,000	6%
no response	8%
Total	100%

Source: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., Visitor Profile Study, 1994.

TABLE 15: DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY REASON FOR THE VISIT

Reason for the Visit	Percent of Total Respondents
Vacation	62%
Convention	15%
Visiting Friends/Relatives	5%
Other Reason	5%
Other Business Trip	4%
Special Event	4%
Corporate Meeting	2%
Sporting Event	2%
Gamble	1%
Total	100%

Source: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., Visitor Profile Study, 1994.